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## Many Christian voters in U.S. see immigration as a crisis

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO  
 Associated Press

**MIAMI (AP)** — Christian voters and faith leaders have long been in the frontlines of providing assistance to migrants — but when it comes to support for immigration policies, from border security to legalization options for migrants already in the U.S., priorities diverge broadly. Both President Joe Biden and GOP challenger Donald Trump traveled to the border in Texas last Thursday to present their vision of how to fix what most agree is a broken system — immigration has risen to a top concern for Americans in this presidential election year. At the border with Mexico in El Paso, Texas, Catholic Bishop Mark Seitz believes that a nation has the right to a secure and orderly border, and to vet those who want to cross it, but he emphasizes the Church's social teaching of caring for the poorest and most vulnerable.

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This combination of photos shows President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump during visits to the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas both on Thursday, Feb. 29, 2024.

Associated Press  
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# Many Christian voters in U.S. see immigration as a crisis

*Continued from Front*

"Here in El Paso ... we don't say, 'Show me your papers.' As Christians we say, 'How can I help you in your suffering?'" Seitz said, who leads the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' migration committee. "This is not a political issue in the first instance, it's about putting into practice what Jesus Christ taught through the Church."

Still in Texas, a flashpoint not only in crossings but in an escalating battle between the federal and state governments over border management, a prominent megachurch pastor and Trump supporter said his church welcomes everyone — but the faithful also have an obligation to obey the law.

"At First Baptist Church in Dallas we do not check for green cards — that's government's responsibility," the Rev. Robert Jeffress said in an email. "The Bible teaches that God created the institution of government to protect its citizens.

... Christians have a duty to obey the laws government establishes which would include immigration laws."

Whether a humanitarian or a security emphasis resonates the most varies among and within Christian denominations — like the white evangelicals who overwhelmingly supported Trump in the 2020 election or the Catholics who were split almost evenly between him and Biden.

According to a survey released this week by the Pew Research Center, majorities of white Catholics and Protestants, both evangelical and nonevangelical, consider that the big influx at the U.S.-Mexican border is a crisis for the United States — a definition that many migrant advocates and Democrats have long disputed.

Only about 3 in 10 Black Protestants and the religiously unaffiliated (or "nones") say the large number of migrants seeking to enter the U.S. is a "crisis," although in each group,



**Migrants eat and wait for assistance while camping on a street in downtown El Paso, Texas, Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

about 4 in 10 say it's a "major problem." Those saying it is not a problem are minorities in the single digits across denominations.

More revealing to policy options is the reason for the influx that Christians cited in the survey.

When asked why they think large numbers of migrants are trying to cross the border, about 7 in 10 white Catholics and evangelicals said that the belief that U.S. immigration policies will make it easy to stay in the country once they arrive is a "major reason," compared to 44% of the "nones" and 52% of Black Protestants. Both groups were more likely to cite violence in their home countries as a major reason why migrants are seeking to enter the U.S. At least 65% of all religious groups cited good economic opportunities in the U.S. as a "major reason."

Among evangelicals, there is nuance in views about specific issues under the broader umbrella of migra-

tion, said Matthew Soerens, national coordinator for the Evangelical Immigration Table, an immigrant advocacy organization.

Most want more border security and respect for the rule of law, and there's growing concern that immigration is an economic burden to the U.S., Soerens said. Yet he noted that even many evangelicals who voted for Trump in 2020 favor permanent legal status for Afghans and support refugee resettlement and a path for citizenship for those in the U.S. illegally.

"I think many Americans (and probably some Members of Congress) read evangelicals' broad support for former President Trump in the primaries thus far as an unqualified affirmation of his immigration policy positions," Soerens said via email.

But he said his organization's research and his experience with local churches suggests that evangelicals "actually have more nuanced views — absolutely

wanting something done about the border ... but also very open to more comprehensive immigration solutions including for the undocumented."

Similarly, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy wing — the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission — said that increased enforcement and border security should be paired with more accessible legal pathways. "But far too often, our toxic politics pit security and reform against one another, ensuring no action is taken while citizens, migrants, officers, border facilities, ministries, and local communities are all overwhelmed," said ERLC leader Brent Leatherwood. "Too many leaders have made the calculation that this cost is acceptable so that partisan trench warfare can be waged. That's not just a failure of leadership; it's a failure to be humane."

From tiny evangelical churches in Tucson, Arizona, or in Hialeah, Florida,

to major faith-based aid organizations like Global Refugee, which was known until this year as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Christian groups across the country often take the lead in helping migrants with shelter, food, and legal as well as schooling assistance.

In Miami, a major destination city for migrants across the Caribbean and Latin America, many travel first to La Ermita, a shrine to the Virgin Mary built five decades ago by Cuban exiles — a growing community where Trump remains widely popular. Its rector has chosen migration as the meditation theme for this Lent, and two large crosses now flank the entrance, with reproductions of passports and clothes worn by migrants hanging on their arms.

Behind them, in English and Spanish, is an exhortation to pray for migrants and the Biblical verse "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers." □

# Senate passes bill to compensate Americans exposed to radiation by the government

By MARY CLARE JALONICK  
and JIM SALTER

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Senate passed legislation Thursday that would compensate Americans exposed to radiation by the government by renewing a law initially passed more than three decades ago.

The bill by Sens. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., would expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to include more people who believe their illnesses were caused by that exposure. While many Republicans have balked at the cost an estimated \$50 billion, according to Hawley's office the senators have argued that the government is at fault and should step up.

Hawley stood outside the Senate before the vote with advocates for the legislation, several of whom have been diagnosed with cancers or who have family members who have been diagnosed. He said it's "hard to look them in



A no trespassing sign hangs on a fence around the West Lake Landfill Superfund site on Friday, April 21, 2023, in Bridgeton, Mo.

the eye" and say they were poisoned by their government, "but we're not going to be there for you."

The bill passed the Senate 69-30, with 20 Republicans and all but two Democrats voting in favor. But its prospects in the House are uncertain.

Uranium processing in the St. Louis area played a pivotal role in developing the nuclear weapons that helped bring an end to World War II and provided a key defense during the Cold War. But eight decades later, the region is still dealing with contami-

nation at several sites.

In July, an investigation published by The Associated Press, The Missouri Independent and MuckRock showed that the federal government and companies responsible for nuclear bomb production and atomic waste storage sites

in the St. Louis area were aware of health risks, spills, improperly stored contaminants and other problems but often ignored them.

While it is difficult to prove definitively that residents' illnesses were caused by the waste, the advocates argue that there is more than enough evidence that it has sickened people in the area.

"I am a two-time breast cancer survivor," said Missouri state Rep. Chantelle Nickson-Clark, a Democrat who represents Florissant, an area that sits along the creek that was contaminated by nuclear waste in the 1960s.

"I lost my mother to breast cancer, an aunt to breast cancer. Two cousins that are breast cancer survivors, a nephew that had a cancerous brain tumor and other genetic mutation deficiencies in my family. I'm here to represent a community that has been underserved, undervalued, underrepresented and unheard." □

Associated Press

# Justice Department beefs up focus on artificial intelligence enforcement, warns of harsher sentences

By ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Justice Department is stepping up its focus on artificial intelligence, with officials warning Thursday that companies and people who deliberately misuse the technology to advance a white-collar crime like price fixing, fraud or market manipulation will be at risk for a harsher sentence.

Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said the Justice Department will take into account how well a company is managing the risks of AI technology each time it assesses a corporate compliance program. Such a program is a set of policies and procedures designed to detect misconduct and to ensure that executives and employees are following the law.

The comments from the Justice Department's No. 2 leader underscore the extent to which law enforcement officials are concerned about how the rapidly developing technology could be exploited, by foreign adversaries or by corporate criminals, to harm the U.S. The remarks were designed to put business leaders on notice of a legal responsibility to mitigate the risk of advancements in AI.

Monaco disclosed the policy moves one day after the Justice Department announced charges against a former Google software engineer accused of stealing AI trade secrets from the Mountain View, California-based company while secretly working with two China-based companies.

"All new technologies are

a double-edged sword but AI may be the sharpest blade yet.

It holds great promise to improve our lives but great peril when criminals use it to supercharge their illegal activities, including corporate crime," Monaco told an American Bar Association conference of white-collar lawyers in San Francisco.

Even as the Justice Department works "to responsibly harness the benefits of AI, we are alert to its risks, and we will be using our tools in new ways to address them," she said.

Federal prosecutors have long used increased sentences for criminals whose behavior is seen as posing an especially serious risk to victims and the public, and the same principle applies to AI, she said.



The Justice Department in Washington, Nov. 18, 2022.

Associated Press

"Where AI is deliberately misused to make a white-collar crime significantly more serious," Monaco said, "our prosecutors will be seeking stiffer sentences for individuals and corporate defendants alike."

"And," she added, "compliance officers should take note. When our prosecutors

assess a company's compliance program as they do in all corporate resolutions they consider how well the program mitigates the company's most significant risks.

And for a growing number of businesses, that now includes the risk of misusing AI." □

# Last month was hottest February ever recorded. It's the ninth-straight broken record

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**  
AP Science Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — For the ninth straight month, Earth has obliterated global heat records with February, the winter as a whole and the world's oceans setting new high-temperature marks, according to the European Union climate agency Copernicus.

The latest record-breaking in this climate change-fueled global hot streak includes sea surface temperatures that weren't just the hottest for February, but eclipsed any month on record, soaring past August 2023's mark and still rising at the end of the month. And February, as well the previous two winter months, soared well past the internationally set threshold for long-term warming, Copernicus reported Wednesday. The last month that didn't set a record for hottest month was in May 2023 and that was a close third to 2020 and 2016. Copernicus records have fallen regularly from June on.

February 2024 averaged 13.54 degrees Celsius (56.37 degrees Fahrenheit), breaking the old record from 2016 by about an eighth of a degree. February was 1.77 degrees Cel-



People watch the sunset at a park on an unseasonably warm day, Feb. 25, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo.

sius (3.19 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the late 19th century, Copernicus calculated. Only last December was more above pre-industrial levels for the month than February was. In the 2015 Paris Agreement, the world set a goal of trying to keep warming at or below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Copernicus' figures are monthly and not quite the same measurement system for the Paris thresh-

old, which is averaged over two or three decades. But Copernicus data shows the last eight months, from July 2023 on, have exceeded 1.5 degrees of warming. Climate scientists say most of the record heat is from human-caused climate change of carbon dioxide and methane emissions from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. Additional heat comes from a natural El Nino, a warming of the central Pacific that chang-

es global weather patterns. "Given the strong El Nino since mid-2023, it's not surprising to see above-normal global temperatures, as El Ninos pump heat from the ocean into the atmosphere, driving up air temperatures. But the amount by which records have been smashed is alarming," said Woodwell Climate Research Center climate scientist Jennifer Francis, who wasn't part of the calculations.

"And we also see the ongoing 'hot spot' over the Arctic, where rates of warming are much faster than the globe as a whole, triggering a cascade of impacts on fisheries, ecosystems, ice melt, and altered ocean current patterns that have long-lasting and far-reaching effects," Francis added. Record high ocean temperatures outside the Pacific, where El Nino is focused, show this is more than the natural effect, said Francesca Guglielmo, a Copernicus senior climate scientist. The North Atlantic sea surface temperature has been at record level compared to the specific date every day for a solid year since March 5, 2023, "often by seemingly-impossible margins," according to University of Miami tropical scientist Brian McNoldy. Those other ocean areas "are a symptom of greenhouse-gas trapped heat accumulating over decades," Francis said in an email. "That heat is now emerging and pushing air temperatures into uncharted territory." "These anomalously high temperatures are very worrisome," said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald. □

Associated Press

## Power lines ignited the largest wildfire in Texas history, officials say

By **JAMIE STENGLE**  
Associated Press

Power lines ignited massive wildfires across the Texas Panhandle that destroyed homes and killed thousands of livestock, officials said Thursday, including the largest blaze in state history that the utility provider Xcel Energy said its equipment appeared to have sparked. The Texas A&M Forest Service said its investigators have concluded that power lines ignited both the historic Smokehouse Creek fire, has burned nearly 1,700 square miles (4,400 square kilometers) and spilled into neighboring

Oklahoma, and the nearby Windy Deuce fire, which has burned about 225 square miles (582 square kilometers). The statement did not elaborate on what led to the power lines igniting the blazes.

"Based on currently available information, Xcel Energy acknowledges that its facilities appear to have been involved in an ignition of the Smokehouse Creek fire," the utility provider stated.

The wildfires that ignited last week in the windswept rural area prompted evacuations in a handful of small communities, destroyed as

many as 500 structures and killed at least two people. Containment levels have been increasing the Smokehouse Creek fire was 74% contained Thursday while the Windy Deuce fire was 89%. But the Forest Service warned that high winds were expected to be moving across the dry landscape, increasing fire danger. Downed power lines and other utility equipment have led to other major wildfires, including the deadly blaze in Maui last year and a massive California wildfire in 2019. A lawsuit filed last week in Hemphill County alleged



Firefighters battle the Smokehouse Creek Fire north of Canadian, Texas, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024.

Associated Press

that a downed power line near the town of Stinnett on Feb. 26 sparked the Smokehouse Creek fire. The lawsuit, filed on behalf of a Stinnett homeowner against Xcel Energy and

two other utilities, alleged the blaze started "when a wooden pole defendants failed to properly inspect, maintain and replace, splintered and snapped off at its base." □

## China accuses U.S. of devising tactics to suppress China despite improvement in relations

By KEN MORITSUGU

Associated Press

**BEIJING (AP)** — China's foreign minister accused the U.S. on Thursday of devising tactics to suppress China's rise and criticized the Biden administration for adding more Chinese companies to its sanctions lists.

Wang Yi, speaking to media during the annual meeting of China's legislature, said China's relations with the U.S. have improved since Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden met in November, but America has not fulfilled its promises.

"If the U.S. always says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major power? If the U.S. gets nervous and anxious when it hears the word 'China,' where is its confidence as a major power?" he said. "If the U.S. is obsessed with suppressing China, it will eventually harm itself."

Wang also demanded that members of the U.N. Security Council stop blocking Palestine from becoming a member of the United Nations.

The 70-year-old veteran



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks during a press conference on the sideline of the National People's Congress in Beijing, Thursday, March 7, 2024.

diplomat, who has earned Xi's trust, returned to the foreign minister's post last summer after his successor, Qin Gang, was abruptly dismissed without explanation after a half year on the job. Wang is also the ruling Communist Party's top foreign affairs official, a more senior position that he moved to when Qin be-

came foreign minister at the end of 2022.

Analysts had speculated the Communist Party might use the weeklong meeting of the National People's Congress to name a new foreign minister, but that appeared off the table after an agenda released on the eve of the opening session did not include person-

nel changes.

China's U.N. ambassador, Zhang Jun, said during a Security Council debate in January that China supports Palestine becoming a full member as soon as possible, as a first step toward creating a Palestinian state, according to Chinese media reports.

Wang called Thursday for a

major international conference to draw up a road-map and timetable for a two-state solution. "We support Palestine becoming a full member of the United Nations and call on individual members of the Security Council not to set obstacles for this any more," he said.

### TAIWAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

He accused the United States, without mentioning it by name, of stirring up trouble in Taiwan and the South China Sea. China says that self-governing Taiwan is part of China and should be under its control, and it claims a wide swath of the South China Sea, putting it at odds with the Philippines, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian neighbors.

The Philippines and the U.S. have accused China of aggressive tactics in trying to block Philippines ships from reaching reefs and other outcroppings that both sides claim, most recently in a collision between coast guard vessels of both countries this week. □

Associated Press

## Japan and India agree to step up security and economic cooperation amid regional security concerns

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan's and India's foreign ministers on Thursday agreed to step up security and economic cooperation as the two Asian countries look to boost their ties in the face of China's growing influence in the region.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa told a joint news conference after talks with her Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar that they reaffirmed their countries would expand bilateral security cooperation, including in the field of defense equipment and technology transfers.

She also said they agreed to look for possibilities to extend their cooperation

to new areas of space and cybersecurity.

Japan and India, members of the Quad grouping that also includes the United States and Australia, have rapidly intensified bilateral ties amid shared concern about China's increasingly assertive economic and military activities in the region.

"India and Japan, as two major Indo-Pacific nations sharing values, history and interests, have an abiding stake in the peace, security, and prosperity of our region, and are ready to play a responsible role commensurate to the needs of our times," said Jaishankar, who is on a three-day visit in Tokyo to meet with Japanese government and busi-

ness officials.

Noting rapidly changing strategic relations and a worsening security environment on the global stage where divisions and contention are deepening, Kamikawa said Japan wants to work with India in resolving common issues through dialogue and cooperation. "Japan especially places importance on its relations with India, which has nurtured its own democracy and history and represents the Global South," Kamikawa said.

"In light of the increasingly severe security environment of today, we confirmed the need for our defense and security cooperation," she said.

The two ministers wel-

comed expanding joint military exercises. Jaishankar said their countries would work together to enhance economic security and

supply chain resilience, and discussed cooperation in areas such as semiconductor, green technology and digital transformation. □



Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, left, and his Japanese counterpart, Yoko Kamikawa, shake hands before their meeting at Iikura Guest House Thursday, March 7, 2024, in Tokyo.

Associated Press

## Trump is ordered to pay legal fees after failed lawsuit over the Steele dossier

By **BRIAN MELLEY**  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Former U.S. President Donald Trump has been ordered to pay a six-figure legal bill to a company founded by a former British spy that he unsuccessfully sued for making what his lawyer called “shocking and scandalous” false claims that harmed his reputation.

A London judge, who threw out the case against Orbis Business Intelligence last month saying it was “bound to fail,” ordered Trump to pay legal fees of 300,000 pounds (\$382,000), according to court documents released Thursday.

Orbis was founded by Christopher Steele, who once ran the Russia desk for Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6. The British court case was one of few in which Trump, who is almost sure to win the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, was not a defendant as he faces massive legal problems



Former President Donald Trump speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC 2023, Saturday, March 4, 2023, at National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Md.

Associated Press

back home.

Trump is charged in four criminal cases and faces a civil complaint in U.S. courts. He lost a subsequent defamation case in which a jury found him liable for sexual abuse, and has

been ordered to pay \$355 million after a fraud verdict against his businesses.

In England, he had gone on the offensive and sued Orbis. Steele was paid by Democrats for research that included salacious al-

legations Russians could potentially use to blackmail Trump. The so-called Steele dossier assembled in 2016 created a political storm just before Trump’s inauguration with rumors and uncorroborated allega-

tions that have since been largely discredited.

Trump sued the company, saying the the dossier was phony and Orbis had violated British data protection laws.

Attorney Hugh Tomlinson said at an October hearing that the former president “suffered personal and reputational damage and distress” over claims in the dossier that he’d taken part in “sex parties” in St. Petersburg and consorted with sex workers in Moscow.

Tomlinson said the dossier “contained shocking and scandalous claims about the personal conduct of President Trump” and included allegations he paid bribes to Russian officials to further his business interests. Orbis said the lawsuit should be thrown out because the report was never meant to be made public and was published by BuzzFeed without the permission of Steele or Orbis. It also said the claim was filed too late. □

## A girl went missing, seizing South Africa’s attention. Now her mother is charged with selling her

By **GERALD IMRAY**  
Associated Press

**CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP)** — The mother of a 6-year-old girl who has been missing in South Africa for nearly three weeks was arrested and charged Thursday with kidnapping and selling or trafficking her daughter, a shocking twist in a case that has seized the country’s attention and sparked deep anger in the small, poor coastal community where the family lives.

The girl, Joslin Smith, has still not been found and police renewed calls for “every citizen, every person” to help find her amid fears she may have been taken to a different city or even out of the country.

In the days after Joslin’s disappearance last month, local media reported that neighbors had accused



The mother of missing 6-year-old Joslin Smith, Kelly Smith, appears in court in Vredenburg, South Africa, Thursday, March 7, 2024.

Associated Press

her mother of selling her for just over \$1,000.

The discovery of a child’s discarded clothing near Joslin’s home last weekend heightened emotions.

Her mother, Kelly Smith whose full name given by prosecutors is Racquel Chantel Smith has now been charged with kidnapping

and human trafficking offenses along with three others, two men and a woman. One of the men is Smith’s boyfriend. She claimed she left Joslin with him on Feb. 19 while she went to work. Joslin was reported missing that day.

The four suspects didn’t enter a plea in response to

the charges and another court hearing was scheduled for next week. They will remain in custody, prosecutors said.

Joslin hasn’t been found despite a major search operation involving police, firefighters, city authorities and specialized sniffer dog units around the family home near Saldanha Bay, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of Cape Town on South Africa’s west coast. The national minister of police visited the area and met with Kelly Smith.

Police said a child’s clothing had been recovered last weekend near the settlement of small houses and shacks where Joslin lived. It was sent to a laboratory for forensic examination. Community members who are also involved in the search said the clothing was spattered with

blood and a knife was also found. Police didn’t give any more details on what was discovered.

Prosecutors said in court documents released Thursday that Kelly Smith and the others conspired to abduct Joslin and intentionally sold, delivered or exchanged her. The suspects face a sentence of life in prison if convicted of the main charge of human trafficking.

The four suspects left the courthouse in Vredenburg, a town near Saldanha Bay, in an armored police van as a large crowd gathered outside, repeatedly shouting “Justice for Joslin.”

Western Cape province police commissioner Thembisile Patekile told reporters that more arrests could be made, but authorities also had to re-focus on the search for Joslin. □

## Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? This is an informative article that illustrates some fish and their names in Papiamentu, which the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, known as "Santa Rosa", wants to share and also obtain information from the public.

### Picuda, *Sphyrna barracuda*, Greater Barracuda

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name



is *Sphyrna barracuda*. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called "ambush predator" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for

its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

### Description

The Picuda is a long fish, with a round body like a torpedo and silver in color

with shiny black stripes. Below, that is, the belly, is whiter, while the top part is darker. Its snout is very pointed, and the lower jaw is longer than the upper one. Its peduncle, where the body meets the tail, is thick, while the tail also forms a crescent but in this case one more "full" than

that of mullet or conefish. This reflects the hunting style of the Picuda. It needs to be able to accelerate quickly when the prey gets close.

### In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions. □

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

## Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some of the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

### Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one of Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

### Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

### Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-



rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

### Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket

and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

### Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □

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## Aruba To You Set to Revolutionize Food Delivery Services in Aruba

(Oranjestad)—Aruba To You, a dynamic new food delivery service platform, is poised to transform the culinary landscape of Aruba with its official launch this week. Spearheaded by Gianluca Sardo, a seasoned Italian entrepreneur based in New York, the platform aims to provide an unparalleled dining experience for both locals and tourists alike.

Fueled by Sardo's passion for Aruba and its vibrant culinary scene, Aruba To You promises to offer a diverse array of cuisines from the island's top restaurants, delivered directly to customers' doorsteps. With a focus on technology, quality, and innovation, the platform seeks to elevate the dining experience while supporting local businesses.

Sardo, who envisions making Aruba his permanent home in the future, views the launch of Aruba To You as a testament to his commitment to the island's growth and prosperity. "Aruba has captured my heart, and I am thrilled to contribute to its

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culinary landscape with Aruba To You," Sardo remarked.

The platform's user-friendly interface and efficient delivery service are designed to provide customers with a seamless and

enjoyable experience.

Despite the presence of established competitors, Sardo emphasizes that Aruba To You seeks to complement existing services rather than compete

directly. "We aim to collaborate with local businesses and contribute to the diversity and accessibility of dining options in Aruba," he stated.

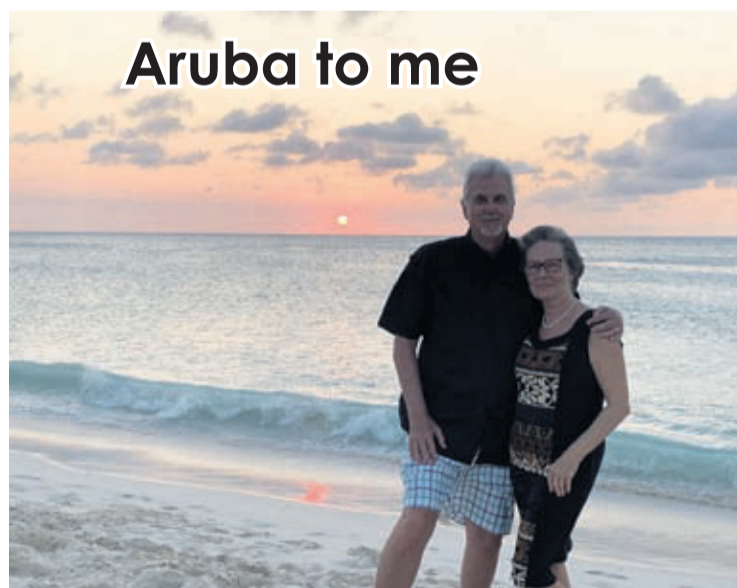
Aruba To You has already garnered significant interest and support from both consumers and restaurant partners, positioning it as a promising addition to Aruba's culinary landscape.

For more information about Aruba To You and its services, please visit [app.arubatoyou.com](http://app.arubatoyou.com) or contact [info@arubatoyou.com](mailto:info@arubatoyou.com)

### About Aruba To You

Aruba To You is a forthcoming food delivery service platform based in Aruba, founded by Gianluca Sardo. With a commitment to excellence, convenience, and technology, Aruba To You aims to revolutionize the dining experience on the island by offering a diverse selection of cuisines from top restaurants, delivered directly to customers' doorsteps. □

## Aruba to me



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Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to:

[news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from our awesome visitor Mike & Kim Springer from

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba to us is living your best life. We've been visiting your fantastic island since December 1 and have just loved our time here. It's been a great place to be to avoid our cold snowy winter back home. From Arikok National Park to the fantastic eating choices and of course the beaches.

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □





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**The Aruba National Park Foundation provides an exciting update on the Lora!**

(Oranjestad)—Back in January Aruba Today shared the exciting news of the reintroduction of the Yellow-Shouldered Amazon, or locally known as the "Lora". This week, the Aruba National Park Foundation (FPNA) has provided some updates on the well-being and development.

The FNPNA has announced that their reintroduced 'Loras' are flourishing in their natural habitat within Parke Nacional Arikok! Here's the latest news on their well-being:

- They're embracing their wild instincts, adapting to munch on mata di yuwana (yuwana plant), cacti, and bonchi di hubada (hubada bean).
- They are spreading their wings, exploring new corners within and beyond the park, displaying confidence in their natural instincts.
- As they settle into their wild lifestyle, they're becoming less dependent on human presence and feeding.
- They're more alert to danger, communicat-



ing a soft purr that signifies vigilance against potential predators; freezing and remaining motionless like statues.

- With their evolved behaviors, they've abandoned chicken-like feeding habits (eating

when on the ground), now favoring natural foraging behaviors.

The best way to help ensure these updates keep coming is to follow these simple, yet effective guidelines:

- Refrain from interfering with the Loras.
- Show respect by maintaining a distance and keeping cats and dogs away.
- Avoid feeding or attempting to capture them, as it would violate the laws protecting this species.

If you come across any Lora with one or two (colored) rings on their leg(s), please report this via WhatsApp giving the date/time, location, number of Lora, and ring colors to FPNA's Wildlife Hotline at +297 592 4476 or email us at [info@arubanationalpark.org](mailto:info@arubanationalpark.org). Together, let's take action and ensure the protection and preservation of our native birds for generations to come. □

Picture courtesy by FNPA.

**Aruba to me**

**ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.**

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: [news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from our awesome visitor Dawn Ramasco, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, USA.

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is a blast with great friends."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



## Visit the island's hidden natural pools

**(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there are an additional two “hidden” natural pools that are situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary.**

### Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known “Cura di Turtuga (Turtle’s Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you’re up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park,

you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you’ve completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other

side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It’s also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

### Cave Pool

This relatively new pool appeared just a few years ago, when a part of the dried up coral floor broke off and created a partition between the ocean and what is now the natural pool that is hidden there. Because it’s still so new, there is no official name for it, but most people just call it the cave pool.

Just like the Conchi, the new



natural pool is situated on the northern coast of Aruba. However, this pool is much easier to reach with any type of vehicle, and there is no hiking needed. This spot has also become a regular stop for touring visitors.

When you get there, maybe you won’t be able to spot the pool immediately, because you will probably notice the moon-shaped lagoon where wild northern waves crash into each other. Sounds scary, but if

you look down on your right, you’ll see a calm, crystal blue little pool in the corner. To get there, you have to climb down some stairs. Be careful when climbing down and follow the instructions of your tour guide if you have one.

And just like Conchi, this pool also has a jumping spot, and a rope to climb back up the boulder. □

Picture of cave pool is credited to RockaBeach Tours

## Episode CIX - 109 - Stone Age Natives

**NOORD — Paleo Amerindian societies moved by land and sea (along the coasts). Their material legacy, which includes works in stone, bone, ivory and wood, is indicative of groups with a family, clan or tribal organization, who live by hunting, fishing and gathering, but are also engaged in artistic and cultural expressions and spiritual activities.**

The cultural diversity and similarities of these groups can determine a lot regarding their origin and path used to reach Aruba. These

characteristics reflected in the way that they buried their deaths. Their distinctive shovel teeth incisors, the peculiar shape of their bones, skulls and jaws, and their tool making abilities left behind as testimony of the part that have played in our history.

Various archaic sites are present on our island. Some are stone quarries, shell maidens and gathering locations while others where single graves, family or clan cemeteries and other natural sites that offer great shelter. From burial sites we can obtain great in-

formation regarding these early peoples and specially though their bones. One of these single graves site was discovered at Piedra di Wara wara, in 1976. Sabania Abao, Sta. Cruz. A single male having shovel incisors, Approx. 37 at age of death, laying North beneath a diorite bolder in a crouch or fetal position on his right side, cranium resting in right hand, microscopic red ochre pigment present on skull.

The only way I suppose these people could have arrived was by sea, however if the sea level was lower in those days, they could have walked and jumped a steam or two. Canashito was one of these sites that these paleo natives liked a lot. One for its safety features, shelter offering caves and fresh water that could be collected for daily use. At Malmok cemetery, combinations of 2 graves at cross angles have been attested several times: they always contained a male and a female skeleton. Unfortunately, only the sex of



one grave at Canashito is known to be a male and one of the skeletons seems to be a short person.

Three of the Canashito dead had their head resting on hand, in a similar fashion as most of the paleo deads at the cemetery at Malmok and the grave at Piedra di Warawara. The burial cluster in Canashito is especially interesting when compared to the cluster of Malmok.

The Malmok site is situated at a distance of 200 m South and 300 m north from the sea, parallel to a former salina or salt -lake. The site shares its sandy subsoil with

the salt-lake. Limestone is found below the sand in the site. This limestone is part of the Lower Terrace Formation. It was formed during a period of a rising sea level. The limestone emerged by the subsequent lowering of the sea level and tectonic uprising. Most of the area of the Malmok site is flat terrain near the salina.

To get to know more over Aruba's and its origins, its animals and culture, we highly recommend you to book your visit for our renowned cultural encounter session has been entertaining curious participants for decades. Mail us at [etnianaativa03@gmail.com](mailto:etnianaativa03@gmail.com) or WhatsApp 297 592 2702 to confirm your participation. Our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels. □



**Article by: Etnia Nativa**

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# Papiamentu words and phrases you may want to know!

(Oranjestad)—Aruba is a melting pot of different nationalities, cultures and languages. Primarily for this reason, the average Aruban can understand and speak Dutch, English and Spanish relatively well. However, as much as we pride ourselves in being able to communicate with almost everyone, we cherish our native tongue Papiamentu above all else. Want to learn some common words in our language? Here are a few basic words and phrases that can get you a hat tip from an Aruban.

When you arrive at the airport in Aruba, one of the first words in Papiamentu you may encounter is "Bon bini." Bon bini in Papiamentu means welcome, and is probably the most famous Papiamentu word for tourists.

### Hi! Bye!

To be fair, there is no unique way to say "hello" in Papiamentu. At least, not officially. We often just use the English "hello" or "hey", or Dutch "hallo" to greet someone. We do however, always follow it up with "con bay?" or "con ta?" Con bay is a shortened version of "con ta bay?", which essentially means "how are you?"

The word "con" in Papiamentu

means "how?" and is pronounced with a rounder "o" sounds, like in the English word "cone". "Ta bay" refers to how you are doing.

When we say goodbye, we use the word "ayo" (not like the Ayo Rock Formation, but also...kinda?). We may also use "te oro", which means "see you later".

### Greetings during the day

Most, if not all, languages have different ways to greet according to the time of day, and Papiamentu is no different. Since Papiamentu is heavily influenced from Portuguese and Spanish, some of these phrases may look very familiar.

1. Bon dia is used in the morning, up to about noon. Bon dia essentially means good morning. The word "bon" means "good", and while "dia" does not directly mean "morning" in English, it is used often to refer to the morning time.
2. Bon tardi. In the afternoon to early evening hours, we use "bon tardi" to greet people, which means "good afternoon". "Tardi" actually comes from the word "atardi", which directly translates to "afternoon". However, the shortened "tardi" is used to keep



- the rhythm on the phrase. And the same could be said for our last greeting of the day.
3. Bon nochi. You guessed it, "bon nochi" means "good night". Just like "tardi", "nochi" is actually the shortened version of the word "anochi".

### Yes...no...maybe?

The affirmative and negative expression is very simple in Papiamentu. Just like Spanish, our yeses are "si" and our no's are "no". Pretty easy right? If you want to gain some extra points from younger locals, you can also say "se", which is a more casual affirmative used

mostly by the younger generation. However, do note: some older generations may find this improper and not respectful, so keep that in mind.

### Thanks man...

Lastly, a word that we can also say more often is "danki", which means literally "thank you". "Danki" is derived from the Dutch word "bedankt". Though we don't really have a translation for "I appreciate it" in English, we do use "masha danki" to convey the message. "Masha" means "a lot" or "very", so "masha danki" means "thank you very much". □

## Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

(Oranjestad)—Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

### Pineapple

Pineapple has more uses



than topping it on your Christmas ham. According to elders, the skin of a pineapple is great to use to refresh your body. Clean the skin thoroughly and make tea or warapa\* with it. It is said that this tea can also be drank after an operation on the ovaries or uterus. This gets rid of irritation and inflammation.

When the fruit is unripe and green, this can be used to stimulate menstruation flow in women. This also stimulates the passing kidney stones. When ripe, the fruit can be used for poisoning in the gut and can help treat rheumatic diseases, like arthritis.

However, breastfeeding women who cannot produce much milk are advised not to consume too

pineapple, and people with acid reflux are recommended to not consume any pineapple at all.



### Arrowroot

Arrowroot is native to tropical America and can be sold as a powder or whole. It is said that you can take arrowroot powder and make a "shalup" (porridge) for stomach pain or when you're feeling weak. You can make it with milk too, but it is advised to best use just water. You can also add prunes for a bit of sweetness. Arrowroot shalup is also good to treat an

unhealthy gut or for diarrhea.

To make arrowroot shalup, boil a bit of water and add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder and stir continuously until you reach porridge consistency. If you make a shalup with milk, add a pinch of salt. Raw arrowroot powder can be used to powder babies.



### Eggplant/Aubergine

Eggplants, or aubergines, are easy to find in supermarkets around the world and can be grown all year round on the island. Relat-

ed to potato and tomato, eggplants are good to calm nerves. It can also be used to lower blood pressure, by steeping its leaves in boiled water and drinking it. You can also make eggplant juice to help purify your blood. However, do make sure to drink slowly; let it mix with your spit and then swallow.

Eggplant kataplan\* can also be used to treat skin tumors, abscesses and hemorrhoids. Eggplant kataplan can also be used externally to treat arthritis.

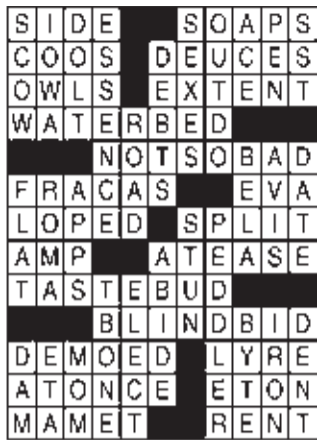
\*warapa: term referring to a water and sugar solution, a.k.a simple syrup.

\*kataplan: porridge-like mixture used externally for wounds or parts of the body that are painful or swollen. □

**CROSSWORD**

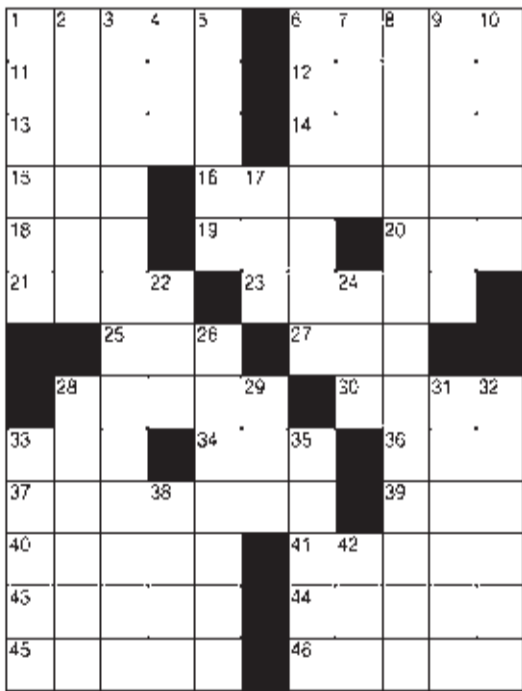
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Handled
  - 6 Locker room need
  - 11 Strutting
  - 12 Bakery come-on
  - 13 Stallone role
  - 14 Woolly ones
  - 15 Lincoln nickname
  - 16 Heavy waves
  - 18 Yang's counter-part
  - 19 Long lunch
  - 20 TV's "Science Guy" Bill
  - 21 Robe feature
  - 23 Sculpted trunk
  - 25 Failure
  - 27 Word of accord
  - 28 Skeleton makeup
  - 30 "Beetle Bailey" dog
  - 33 Letter after sigma
  - 34 Pool need
  - 36 Coffee dispenser
  - 37 Consistent with one's reputation
- DOWN**
- 39 German article
  - 40 Michael of Monty Python
  - 41 Book part
  - 43 Bumbling
  - 44 Put up
  - 45 Lawyer's workload
  - 46 Finishes last
  - 1 Uses an aerosol
  - 2 Mecca's place
  - 3 Tennis tourney division
  - 4 Rickety boat
  - 5 Smells
  - 6 16-ounce beer can
  - 7 Spoken
  - 8 Feminist field
  - 9 Beginning stage
  - 10 Director Hallström
  - 17 Ump's call
  - 22 Gaul invader
  - 24 Old auto
  - 26 Pours, as port
  - 28 Split item
  - 29 Day warmer
  - 31 Spell
  - 32 Starts
  - 33 Subject
  - 35 Old auto
  - 38 Ready to pick
  - 42 Old hand



**Yesterday's answer**

- 6 16-ounce beer can
- 7 Spoken
- 8 Feminist field
- 9 Beginning stage
- 10 Director Hallström
- 17 Ump's call
- 22 Gaul invader
- 24 Old auto
- 26 Pours, as port
- 28 Split item
- 29 Day warmer
- 31 Spell
- 32 Starts
- 33 Subject
- 35 Old auto
- 38 Ready to pick
- 42 Old hand



AXYDI.BAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

**3-8 CRYPTOQUOTE**

YBCJ'F IZFG HJAFBFGJKG WKO  
DAQJKG PDJFGBZK BF, TMWG  
WAJ NZD OZBKQ CZA ZGMJAF?

— IWAGBK YDGMJA LBKQ SA.  
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: LIFE IS NAUGHT BUT FROTH AND BUBBLES. TWO THINGS STAND LIKE STONE: KINDNESS IN ANOTHER'S TROUBLES; COURAGE IN OUR OWN. — ADAM LINDSAY GORDON



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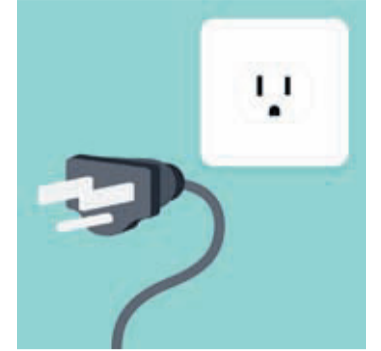
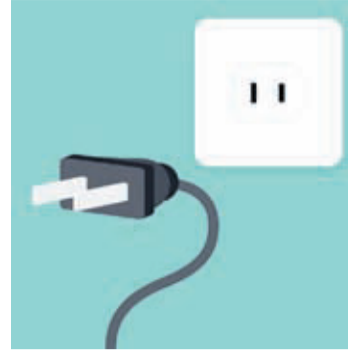
Prices for taxi fair are set by the Department of Public Transportation and are based on destination rather than mileage. Legally, taxis are insured for 5 passengers only, which means that taxis are only allowed to transport 5 people at a time. This is due to safety reasons. Taxis are pretty much always available and you can ever hire one for 50\$ an hour.



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Noord 107

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San Nicolas: ImSan: +297-527-8833  
Coast Guard: 913  
National Security: 11911  
Red Cross: 582-2219



**Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba**

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

**Electrical power**

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

**Safety**

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



**Pharmacies**

- Aloe 584-4606
- Centro Medico 584-5794
- Central 585-1965
- Dakota 588-7364
- Del Pueblo 582-1253
- Eagle 587-9011
- Kibrahacha 583-4908
- Maria 585-8145
- DiServicio Noord 586-4606
- Oduber 582-1780
- Paradera 588-6638
- San Lucas 584-5119
- San Nicolas 584-5712
- Santa Anna 586-8181
- Santa Cruz 585-8028
- Sero Preto 584-4833
- Trupial 583-8560

**Drinking water**

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

**Supermarket hours**

Supermarket hours may

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# Candy companies pitch gum as a stress reliever and concentration aid to revive stale U.S. sales



Alyona Fedorchenko, vice president for global gum and mints in the Mars Snacking division stands for a portrait at the company's employee store Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024, in Chicago.

Associated Press

**By DEE-ANN DURBIN**  
**AP Business Writer**

Candy companies want to know: What will make Americans start chewing gum again?

Gum's bubble burst during the COVID-19 pandemic, when masks and social distancing made bad breath less of a worry and fewer people spent on impulse buys. The number of packages of gum sold dropped by nearly a third in the United States in 2020, according to Circana, a market research firm.

Consumer demand has picked up only slightly since then. Last year, U.S. chewing gum sales rose less than

1% to 1.2 billion units, which was still 32% fewer than in 2018. Although sales in dollars are back to pre-pandemic levels, that's mostly due to inflation; the average pack of gum cost \$2.71 last year, \$1.01 more than it did in 2018, Circana said. It's a similar story globally. Worldwide gum sales rose 5% last year to more than \$16 billion, according to market researcher Euro-monitor. That still was 10% below the 2018 sales figure. Some manufacturers are responding to the bland demand by leaving the market altogether. In 2022,

Mondelez International sold its U.S., Canadian and European gum business, including brands like Trident, Bubblicious, Dentyne and Chiclets, to Amsterdam-based Perfetti Van Melle.

Chicago-based Mondelez, which makes Oreos and Cadbury chocolates, said it wanted to shift resources to brands with higher growth opportunities.

Other American confectioners are cutting slow-selling brands. Ferrera Candy Co., which is headquartered in Forest Park, Illinois, quietly ended production of Fruit Stripe and Super

Bubble gums in 2022 after more than 50 years.

Chewing gum is fighting more than a virus, however, when it comes to regaining its flavor. Lynn Dornblaser, the director of innovation and insight at market research firm Mintel, said a growing number of consumers are trying to limit sugar in their diets and to eat foods with more natural ingredients. That limits the appeal of gum, since even sugar-free varieties often contain artificial sweeteners.

U.S. consumers, like those in Europe and Asia, also may be increasingly concerned about the stubborn litter from used gum, Dornblaser said. Singapore famously banned the sale, import and manufacturing of chewing gum in 1992, blaming the careless disposal of the substance on subways for gumming up service. □



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**San Nicolas**

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Relacional Tel. 583 5400

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dishwasher  
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2172680

**Eagle Aruba Resort**  
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(Fixed unit/week) fri-fri 5th floor  
Unit 5584  
5,500/ wk or 2 for 9,000  
(plus closing 450 / wk)  
Email: eck809@hotmail.com

2172680

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# Do AI video-generators dream of San Pedro? Madonna among early adopters of AI's next wave

By **MATT O'BRIEN**  
AP Technology Writer

Whenever Madonna sings the 1980s hit "La Isla Bonita" on her concert tour, moving images of swirling, sunset-tinted clouds play on the giant arena screens behind her.

To get that ethereal look, the pop legend embraced a still-uncharted branch of generative artificial intelligence—the text-to-video tool. Type some words say, "surreal cloud sunset" or "waterfall in the jungle at dawn" and an instant video is made.

Following in the footsteps of AI chatbots and still image-generators, some AI video enthusiasts say the emerging technology could one day upend entertainment, enabling you to choose your own movie with customizable story lines and endings. But there's a long way to go before they can do that, and plenty of ethical pitfalls on the way.

For early adopters like Madonna, who's long pushed art's boundaries, it was more of an experiment. She nixed an earlier version of "La Isla Bonita" concert visuals that used more conventional computer graphics to evoke a tropical mood.

"We tried CGI. It looked pretty bland and cheesy and she didn't like it," said Sasha Kasiuha, content director for Madonna's Celebration Tour that continues through late April. "And then we decided to try AI." ChatGPT-maker OpenAI gave a glimpse of what sophisticated text-to-video technology might look like when the company recently showed off Sora, a new tool that's not yet publicly available. Madonna's team tried a different product from New York-based startup Runway, which helped pioneer the technology by releasing its first public text-to-video model last March. The company released a more advanced "Gen-2" version in June. Runway CEO Cristóbal Valenzuela said while some see these tools as a



**Madonna speaks at the MTV Video Music Awards at Barclays Center on Sept. 12, 2021, in New York.**

Associated Press

"magical device that you type a word and somehow it conjures exactly what you had in your head," the most effective approaches are by creative professionals looking for an upgrade to the decades-old digital editing software they're already using.

He said Runway can't yet make a full-length documentary. But it could help fill in some background video, or b-roll the supporting shots and scenes that help tell the story.

"That saves you perhaps like a week of work," Valenzuela said. "The common thread of a lot of use cases is people use it as a way of augmenting or speeding up something they could have done before."

Runway's target customers are "large streaming companies, production companies, post-production companies, visual effects companies, marketing teams, advertising companies. A lot of folks that make content for a living," Valenzuela said.

Dangers await. Without effective safeguards, AI video-generators could threaten democracies with convincing "deepfake" videos of things that never happened, or as is already

the case with AI image generators flood the internet with fake pornographic scenes depicting what appear to be real people with recognizable faces. Under pressure from regulators, major tech companies have promised to watermark AI-generated outputs to help identify what's real. There also are copyright disputes brewing about the video and image collections the AI systems are being trained upon (neither Runway nor OpenAI discloses its data sources) and to what extent they are unfairly replicating trademarked works. And there are fears that, at some point, video-making machines could replace human jobs and artistry.

For now, the longest AI-generated video clips are still measured in seconds, and can feature jerky movements and telltale glitches such as distorted hands and fingers. Fixing that is "just a question of more data and more training," and the computing power on which that training depends, said Alexander Waibel, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University who's been researching AI since the 1970s.

"Now I can say, 'Make me a video of a rabbit dressed as Napoleon walking through New York City,'" Waibel said. "It knows what New York City looks like, what a rabbit looks like, what Napoleon looks like."

Which is impressive, he said, but still far from crafting a compelling storyline.

Before it released its first-generation model last year, Runway's claim to AI fame was as a co-developer of the image-generator Stable Diffusion. Another company, London-based Stability AI, has since taken over Stable Diffusion's development.

The underlying "diffusion model" technology behind most leading AI generators of images and video works by mapping noise, or random data, onto images, effectively destroying an original image and then predicting what a new one should look like. It borrows an idea from physics that can be used to describe, for instance, how gas diffuses outward.

"What diffusion models do is they reverse that process," said Phillip Isola, an associate professor of computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "They kind of

take the randomness and they congeal it back into the volume. That's the way of going from randomness to content. And that's how you can make random videos."

Generating video is more complicated than still images because it needs to take into account temporal dynamics, or how elements within the video change over time and across sequences of frames, said Daniela Rus, another MIT professor who directs its Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. Rus said the computing resources required are "significantly higher than for still image generation" because "it involves processing and generating multiple frames for each second of video."

That's not stopping some well-heeled tech companies from trying to keep outdoing each other in showing off higher-quality AI video generation at longer durations. Requiring written descriptions to make an image was just the start. Google recently demonstrated a new project called Genie that can be prompted to transform a photograph or even a sketch into "an endless variety" of explorable video game worlds.

In the near term, AI-generated videos will likely show up in marketing and educational content, providing a cheaper alternative to producing original footage or obtaining stock videos, said Aditi Singh, a researcher at Cleveland State University who has surveyed the text-to-video market.

When Madonna first talked to her team about AI, the "main intention wasn't, 'Oh, look, it's an AI video,'" said Kasiuha, the creative director.

"She asked me, 'Can you just use one of those AI tools to make the picture more crisp, to make sure it looks current and looks high resolution?'" Kasiuha said. "She loves when you bring in new technology and new kinds of visual elements." □

# Olympic long jumper Davis-Woodhall sees new commitment lead to new color of medals gold

By EDDIE PELLIS  
AP National Writer

Virtually every time long jumper Tara Davis-Woodhall steps onto a runway, there's a chance the silver medal she won at last year's world championships will find a new resting place — even deeper back among her vast collection of awards and trophies. Nothing against finishing second. When Davis-Woodhall won that silver in Budapest last year, it opened doors to sponsors, recognition and motivation. It also left a sting because first place was within reach and she didn't cash in. She is having no such problems this year. With the Olympics a bit more than four months away, the 24-year-old, who lives and trains with her husband Hunter in Fayetteville, Arkansas, has set herself up as the woman to beat in Paris. Over the weekend, she added the world indoor championship to her American indoor title. She has turned the 7-meter mark (22 feet, 11 3/4 inches) the mark that has been the standard this century for winning Olympic medals into not just a goal but an expectation.

"At training, we're dialing some things down, which



Tara Davis-Woodhall, of the United States, reacts after an attempt in the women's long jump during the World Athletics Indoor Championships at the Emirates Arena in Glasgow, Scotland, Sunday, March 3, 2024.

will make everything over 7 if I hit the right thing," she said. "Other than that, I'm just going out there and having fun and trying to see how far I can jump." Signs that this could be a big year first showed themselves at a routine January practice at the University of Arkansas indoor track. Davis-Woodhall lined up, took off and could hardly believe where she landed. She passed 7 meters on a

jump with an abbreviated 12-step run-up.

"The reason it happened is her commitment to consistency this year," her coach, Travis Geopfert, said after that workout. "Her fitness level is like it's never been. It's her commitment to everything. The weight room, nutrition, sleep, all of that has just been phenomenal. And the result is what you see today." This is also something of a comeback

season for Hunter, who won bronze medals at 400 meters at the last two Paralympics.

At last year's para worlds, Hunter, who was born with a congenital defect called fibular hemimelia and had his legs amputated below the knee at 11 months old, could not make it to the starting line because of issues with his prosthetics. He had been in a long-running disagreement with the

sport's authorities about how long his prosthetics are allowed to be. At worlds, he brought a makeshift pair of prosthetics into the 400-meter race, and as he was preparing, he felt one of the bolts slipping.

"It got to the point where I couldn't even walk on it," he said. "I kind of hopped back to the blocks and that was it. I had to watch that final go. I had to sit on the side and watch it all slip out of my hands. But it was my responsibility. I wasn't prepared."

That, plus Tara's second-place finish, led the husband-wife team to rededicate themselves to preparation in 2024. Gone are the trips down the street for easy fast food. In is more home cooking and healthy eating. Gone are the compromises they would sometimes make on the training schedule. In is more accountability between themselves, and between themselves and Geopfert. Tara says the silver medal from worlds last year was a blessing of sorts.

"It's relatively cool," she said. "But when you wrap your life around a moment and a place and all you want to do is win, getting second place, it hurt me. □"

Associated Press

# Ben Simmons will miss the rest of the Brooklyn Nets' season because of his back problems

By BRIAN MAHONEY  
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Ben Simmons will miss the remainder of the season, the third straight year the former All-Star's season has ended early because of back problems.

The Brooklyn Nets said Thursday that Simmons will use the rest of this season to consult with specialists and seek treatment options for the pinched nerve in his lower back that has sidelined him twice this season. Simmons has been limited to 15 games this season. He missed 38 straight at one

point and has sat out the last five.

"Simmons, along with his representatives and Nets medical personnel, are currently in discussions with numerous experts to determine the course of action that will provide him with the best opportunity for long-term sustainable health," the Nets said.

The No. 1 pick in the 2016 draft finishes with averages of 6.1 points, 7.9 rebounds and 5.7 assists. He has played in just 57 games and not finished a season since the Nets acquired him from Philadelphia at

the trade deadline in 2022 in the deal that sent James Harden to the 76ers.

Simmons hadn't played for Philadelphia to start that season, citing mental health concerns, and then hurt his back trying to regain his conditioning after arriving in Brooklyn. He had a microdiscectomy, a procedure to remove a small fragment of a herniated disc, after that season ended.

Simmons then played in just 42 games in 2022-23 before he was shut down in March because a nerve impingement in his lower back.

He was healthy again and reinstalled as the starting point guard to begin this season, but then was injured in a Nov. 6 loss to Milwaukee. It was originally believed that was a left hip injury, before an MRI exam determined that the pain was caused by his lower back. Simmons didn't play again until Jan. 29, when he had 10 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds in 18 minutes off the bench in a rout of Utah. But he played in only eight more games. Simmons has one year and about \$40 million remaining on his contract. □



Brooklyn Nets guard Ben Simmons brings the ball up during the first half of the team's NBA basketball game against the Minnesota Timberwolves, Saturday, Feb. 24, 2024, in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

## Derrick Henry and Saquon Barkley among veterans eager to see how the NFL values running backs

By **TERESA M. WALKER**

AP Pro Football Writer

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)** —

Derrick Henry is back in the gym, eager to prove turning 30 is just a number that shouldn't affect the four-time Pro Bowl running back's value on the NFL's open market.

The man who organized a group chat among the league's top running backs last summer is about to find out exactly what teams are willing to pay for proven experience.

And Henry has company with stars such as Saquon Barkley, Josh Jacobs and Tony Pollard — the three running backs hit with franchise tags in 2023 — also hitting free agency. Barkley didn't sign his tag and wound up playing last season for \$10.1 million.

So will these running backs find big contracts when the NFL free agent market opens next week? Or will they have to be patient, choosy or simply have to settle for less?

"We're all going to find out," Texans general manager Nick Caserio said. "Free agency is just — it's what does the market tell you? And then any player, what are you willing to pay



**New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley (26) in action against the Philadelphia Eagles during an NFL football game, Monday, Dec. 25, 2023, in Philadelphia.**

that player commensurate with their role?"

The cost of free agents changes every March with the start of each new NFL year.

Positions get slotted, and running backs have been hit the hardest with less expensive replacements available.

Only kickers and punters are paid less on average by position than backs whose bodies take crunch-

ing hits every handoff and block.

No NFL team in the offseason gave itself more negotiating time with either a franchise or transition tag on a running back that would've cost a mere \$9.7 million for 2024. Again, only kickers and punters had a lower value.

Of the nine total tags since the start of the offseason, seven went to defensive players.

So a group of experienced and talented players is poised to hit the free agent market.

"There's some good names there," Giants GM Joe Schoen said at the NFL combine last week. "I mean, it's a little bit of a saturated market. There are some guys at different ages that have had success, there's some older guys that have had some success. So, it's a diverse

group."

Age isn't a factor for Jacobs at just 26. But he is coming off his worst season, having rushed for only 805 yards last season, and the Raiders also have Zamir White as they look for a possible replacement for Jacobs.

"The talent pool at that position in free agency is relatively high," Raiders GM Tom Telesco said.

Even with the jump in the NFL salary cap for 2024, running backs may be forced to be patient and choosy.

One thing in their favor? The pool for running backs in April's draft is a bit shallow with only 12 projected as fifth-round picks or better out of 35 graded before the combine.

Incoming running backs have noticed the low value the NFL has placed on their position.

Blake Corum of Michigan said it's up to running backs to fix that narrative by being game-changers.

"Running backs obviously want to get paid more, but at the end of the day it is what it is, you can only control the controllables and that's the way I look at it so I'm not so worried about it," Corum said. □

Associated Press

## Jake Paul fight against Mike Tyson is announced for July 20 and will be streamed live on Netflix

**ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)** —

Social media star-turned-boxer Jake Paul will fight

former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson on July 20 at AT&T Stadium, Netflix an-

nounced Thursday.

The streaming platform will provide live coverage of the bout between the 27-year-old Paul and 57-year-old Tyson, who hasn't fought since he and Roy Jones Jr. met in a 2020 exhibition that ended as a draw.

Paul built a significant fan following as a YouTube influencer and turned professional in boxing four years ago. He has won nine of 10 fights with six knockouts against mostly undistinguished opponents. His only loss came last year to Tommy Fury, half brother of WBC heavyweight champ Tyson Fury.

"Iron Mike" Tyson was the undisputed world heavyweight champion from 1987-90 and retired in 2005 after winning 50 fights, 44 by knockout.

"My sights are set on becoming a world champion, and now I have a chance to prove myself against the greatest heavyweight champion of the world, the baddest man on the planet and the most dangerous boxer of all time. Time to put Iron Mike to sleep," Paul wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Paul's second professional fight was on the undercard of the Tyson-Jones fight. His most recent fight was last Saturday, when

he knocked out Ryan Bourland.

"I'm very much looking forward to stepping into the ring with Jake Paul at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas," Tyson said in a statement.

"He's grown significantly as a boxer over the years, so it will be a lot of fun to see what the will and ambition of a 'kid' can do with the experience and aptitude of a GOAT. It's a full circle moment that will be beyond thrilling to watch; as I started him off on his boxing journey on the undercard of my fight with Roy Jones and now I plan to finish him." □



**Jake Paul speaks during a news conference Monday, Sept. 12, 2022, in Los Angeles.**

Associated Press